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SUBJECT: POLAND'S AID TO AFGHANISTAN

REF: WARSAW 372

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Classified By: Acting Econ Chief Thomas A. Palaia for reason 1.4(b,d)

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Poland plans to spend EUR 8 million on bilateral assistance to Afghanistan in 2009. The dearth of NGOs in Ghazni province, where Polish assistance is focused, is forcing the Poles to change their style of providing aid. Eight Polish civilians are currently posted in Afghanistan, including the Deputy Director of the Development Cooperation Department, Poland's version of USAID. The United States already has confronted some of the difficulties the Poles are working through in making their civilians in Afghanistan operational. As they work to develop their own training programs, the Poles would appreciate access to training materials developed by the USG, to use as models, and also would welcome a visit from a U.S. civilian with experience in Afghanistan. End summary.

Evolving Approach to Aid

¶2. (SBU) On April 9, EconOff discussed Polish aid to Afghanistan with Katarzyna Kot and Zbigniew Rucinski, from the Polish MFA's Development Cooperation Department. Poland only recently became an aid donor, and Polish policy has been to work exclusively through NGOs, to whom the Polish government makes grants. However, the dearth of NGOs in Ghazni province, Afghanistan, is forcing the Polish government to strengthen its autonomous ability to run projects. In late February / early March, a study mission went to Ghazni with participation from the Ministries of Interior, Agriculture, Infrastructure, Health, Culture and Foreign Affairs (reftel).

¶3. (C) Poland currently has an eight-person team of civilians in Ghazni, including the Deputy Director of the Development Cooperation Department. The Poles are at the beginning stages of developing a program to train the required specialists, and expressed interest in learning more about materials that have been developed by the United States for PRT training courses at the Foreign Service Institute, the National Defense University or elsewhere. Poland is also deploying a third civil-military cooperation (CIMIC) team to the Ghazni PRT.

¶4. (C) The Poles are grappling with whether to supply aid through the governor's office, or -- because of corruption concerns -- to try to provide the aid directly. Kot and

Rucinski identified two key limitations on effectiveness of civilians in Ghazni. First, the ability of the Afghans to absorb assistance. In some cases, the Poles have not been able to find a suitable partner on the Afghan side. Second, the biggest problem the Poles are trying to manage is how to make their development personnel operational. They are dependent on the Polish military for transport and security, and the military's priorities may be different. (NOTE: At present, the Polish military has a shortfall of armored transport in Afghanistan. Fifty more armored vehicles are expected in Summer 2009, but Polish forces will also increase by 400, thus still leaving a shortfall of about 20 vehicles. End note.)

Projects

¶4. (SBU) A fact sheet provided by Kot states that in 2009, the volume of bilateral Polish assistance to Afghanistan will increase to EUR 8 million (about USD 10.4 million). A separate fact sheet provided by Kot indicates that for 2009 assistance to Afghanistan the Poles have budgeted PLN 24.5 million (about USD 7.5 million). NOTE: The difference in the two figures may be because of donations to multilateral funds, as well as substantial zloty (PLN) exchange rate fluctuation due to the global financial crisis. End note.

¶5. (SBU) Most of the funds will be allocated to projects implemented by experts within the Ghazni PRT. Polish support to Afghanistan is focused on strengthening state structures and civil society, diversifying the economy, access to potable water, health protection and education.

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¶6. (SBU) Of the PLN 24.5 million, PLN 18.5 million has been committed for the following nine projects:

- modernizing the western bypass in Ghazni city (PLN 9.3 million)
- modernizing the road from the Kenek bridge to the provincial hospital (PLN 2.6 million)
- modernizing the road from the Farokhy bridge to the Sanayee gate in Ghazni city (PLN 2.2 million)
- developing the electrical grid in Ghazni city (PLN 1.36 million)
- buying equipment for the state-owned radio and television station in Ghazni city (PLN 1.36 million)
- buying medical equipment for the provincial hospital in Ghazni (PLN 1.04 million)
- reconstructing the bazaar in Gelan (PLN 263 thousand)
- green zones in Ghazni (PLN 203 thousand)
- buying furniture for the district center in Jaghori (PLN 76 thousand)

¶7. (SBU) Poland also provides assistance to Afghanistan through voluntary contributions to international funds and organizations. Through 2008 Polish multilateral assistance to the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the World Food Programme (WFP) totaled over USD 3.5 million. The largest contribution was made in 2008 when Poland allotted USD 1.3 million to the ARTF and about USD 1 million to the WFP.

¶8. (SBU) From 2002 to 2008, over 60 Polish aid projects were implemented in Afghanistan, at a total cost of EUR 2.5 million. These projects mainly consisted of construction and modernization of schools and health centers, support for agricultural education and constructing water pumps. In 2008, Poland organized the "Strategic Economic Needs and Security Exercise" (SENSE), in which representatives from government, media and NGOs received hands-on training in managing economic transformation and governing a democratic state.

19. (SBU) Comment: The Poles are grappling with many of the same issues that the United States and other countries have already faced in establishing PRTs: the relationship between military and civilians, how to deliver aid without assistance from NGOs, and how to prepare personnel to be effective in the Afghan environment. In some cases, it has been possible to arrange for USAID or State Department officers concluding tours in Afghan PRTs to stop off in European capitals on their way back to the United States. Kot and Rucinski said that if such an officer could be routed through Warsaw, perhaps during the coming summer transfer season, he or she would find an audience eager to learn from that officer's experience. End comment.

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